

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – Matthew 10:16-23 – November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

This past Tuesday was the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther nailing the 95 theses to the Castle church door in Wittenberg. And my family and I marked the occasion by singing *A Mighty Fortress* at lunch time. And I got to think about all the blessings that Jesus to me through the Reformation. My dad is Lutheran pastor and he told me that Jesus is my Savior and now I get to tell my children that Jesus is their Savior and that the kingdom's ours forever. The next morning at breakfast we sang *A Mighty Fortress* again and afterwards Luke said, "That's a real nice song." Yeah it is a real nice song. My favorite line in that hymn comes in the 4<sup>th</sup> stanza: "He's by our side upon the plain." The "He" is Jesus. Jesus is by our side upon the plain. The "plain" is the field of battle. Often times they would fight battles in open fields or plains. And as Jesus says in our gospel today from Matthew 10, the Christian faces a lot of opposition. But that's ok because "He's by our side upon the plain." Even 500 years later, He's still by our side upon the plain.

The tendency on the anniversary of anything (whether it be a marriage or the anniversary of a congregation), the tendency on the anniversary of anything is to screen out all the difficulties and focus only on the blessings. And that's not a bad thing. An anniversary is a celebration and so it makes sense to focus on the good. But to get a full picture of anything you have to include the difficulties and the opposition. And so if you look over the history of the Lutheran church you can see that there has been an easy time for the Lutheran church. The Lutheran church has always faced opposition and difficulties from within and without. And that's why its so important to hear Jesus today paint for us a very honest and realistic picture of what it's going to be like for his followers. Jesus says, **"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. ... You will be hated by everyone because of me."** (Matt 10:16, 22) But if Jesus paints such a gloomy picture of what life is going to be like for his followers here on earth, well then why is there any reason to celebrate at all?

Well, it starts by recognizing that the greatest opposition we face is in our own hearts. The very first of the 95 theses was, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said repent, he willed that the entire life of a believer be one of repentance." Just like God told Adam and Eve that the ground would produce thorns and thistles, every day we see thorns and thistles and weeds grow up in our own hearts, and to repent everyday means to pull those weeds up every day and bring them to Jesus and say, "I'm sorry. There's something about the soil of my heart that just seems to produce these every day."

Jesus said that everyone who sins is a slave to sin (John 8). Jesus pictures our sins like a chain that wraps around us and pulls us into hell. But then Jesus says, "But if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." Jesus took the chain of your sins off of you and wrapped them around himself on the cross. And now your free of the guilt of sin.

It was an important event when Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the castle church door in Wittenberg. But it was an infinitely more important event when Jesus was nailed to the cross. We certainly don't worship Martin Luther. Luther is important because he pointed to Jesus. Without Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, nothing would be worth celebrating. But because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, every day is a day worth celebrating: Your sins are gone! Even if you're having a really bad day, you can still say, "My sins are gone. It's a good day."

And then three days later, God raised him from the dead. He came back from the dead. And so now what can Satan take from me that my Jesus can't give back to me a hundredfold? If I die, Jesus will raise me from the dead in glorious splendor. If I lose money, I have treasure in heaven. If someone insults me

for being a Christian, Jesus will say to me well done good and faithful servant. What can Satan take from me, that my Jesus won't give back a hundredfold?

That gives us a message to share, and Jesus tells his disciples today that they would have opportunities to speak that message before kings. He says, **"On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles."** (10:18-19) Martin Luther got to speak the gospel message before kings. In 1521 he brought before the emperor Charles V, one of the most powerful men in the world at that time and Charles ordered him to take back everything he had written and that's when Luther said, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God. Here I stand I can do no other. God help me. Amen." And about 10 years later in 1530 the Lutherans stood before that same emperor and read a summary of what they believe.

It can be a pretty nerve racking thing to stand before kings and it can be a pretty nerve racking thing for us to tell others the good news about Jesus. But He's by our side upon the plain with his good gifts and Spirit. He says, **"But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."** (Matt 10:19-20)

And Jesus wants us to keep speaking this good news until he comes back. He says, **"Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel until the Son of Man comes."** (Matt 10:23) There's never going to be a time when we say, "I don't have to share the Gospel anymore. My works all done." Jesus wants his followers to play through until the whistle. You know what it's like in sports like football or basketball, the coach tells his players, "Play until the whistle." That is, "Don't stop playing in the middle of a play. Don't give up. Play through until the whistle." Jesus tells his followers, play through until the whistle, keep sharing the good news until the trumpet sounds and the Son of Man returns. It's the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. I don't know if there will be a 600<sup>th</sup>, Jesus might return before that, but Jesus wants us to keep sharing the Gospel until the whistle blows and He returns.

I heard a pastor say this past week that he looked into his family history and he said he had to count back 14 generations to get to 500 years ago. So 500 years is 14 generations. But you know what God said to Moses. He said that he shows love not just to 14 generations, but to a 1,000 generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. 1000 generations. That's a lot longer than 500 years. SO 500 years later, He's still by our side upon the plain. And he'll be by our side forever. Amen.